DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 222 EA 025 857

AUTHOR Davidson, Betty M.
TITLE School Restructuring: A Study of Curriculum and Instruction in Selected Accelerated Schools.
PUB DATE Jan 94
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (San Antonio, TX, January 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Elementary Education; Interprofessional Relationship; *Leadership Styles; *Organizational Change; *Organizational Communication; Resistance to Change; *School Based Management; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS *Accelerated Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the change process that occurred in four elementary schools that implemented a participatory mode of school organization, the Accelerated Schools model. Methodology included document analysis and a total of 35 interviews with teachers, administrators, social workers, and parents. Findings indicate that: (1) the principal's leadership style affected teacher empowerment and curricular and instructional changes; (2) district restructuring, especially the movement toward site-based management, played an important role in the change process; and (3) universities can play a minor role by providing training and technical assistance to principals and teachers. Finally, creative communities of inquiry began to develop in three of the schools. One table and one figure are included. Contains 17 references. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 370 222

SERA1994

School Restructuring: A Study of Curriculum and Instruction in Selected Accelerated Schools

Betty M. Davidson
University of New Orleans 70148

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Davidson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 025 857

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association in San Antonio, TX, January 28, 1994.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the change process that occurred in four elementary schools that moved from a conventional mode of school organization to a participatory mode of school organization by implementing the Accelerated Schools model. The analysis indicates that there was substantial variability among the schools in the extent of change in the role of curriculum and instruction.

This initial study of the implementation of the accelerated schools process in a select group of schools illustrates that: 1) There was evidence of a relationship between the principal, teacher empowerment, and curricular and instructional changes, at least in the Accelerated Schools process; 2) district restructuring, especially the movement toward site-based management, also appears to be an important aspect of the change process; and 3) universities can provide training and technical assistance to the principal and teachers that help facilitate the restructuring process.

OVERVIEW

The Accelerated Schools project is based upon the research of at-risk students that was initiated by Henry M. Levin (1987a & b). His research representes an attempt to assess the extent and growth of the at-risk population, the educational outcomes for this group, the social and economic consequences for the nation, and the causes of the failure to bring these students into the educational mainstream.

Levin's (1987a & b) findings indicate that the traditional approach to educating at-risk students is to remediate. The results of remediation are that the students who start behind their peers, fall further behind as they progress through school. By sixth grade these students were two years behind their grade in achievement and over half failed to complete high school. If these students managed to complete high school, they were performing at an eighth grade level. The research also reported the organization of schools, curriculum, and instructional strategies were all found to contribute to reduced expectations, uninspiring school experiences, expectations of student failure, and an inability to draw upon the rich talents of teachers and students and the potential contributions of parents. Accelerated Schools were designed to have precisely the opposite consequences.

The focus of this paper is on the factors that appear to facilitate transitions in the area of curriculum and instruction when a school takes on the formal philosophy and processes involved in becoming an Accelerated School. Four elementary

schools were used in the study. Three began the Accelerated Schools restructuring process in the fall of 1990; the fourth began in the fall of 1989. The paper has seven parts: 1) overview, 2) background, 3) the Accelerated Schools process, 4) research methodology, 5) an analysis of the changes in the curriculum and instruction, 6) the factors that influenced these changes in the four schools, and 7) conclusions and implications.

BACKGROUND

The fact that the education reform movement of the 1980s, which emphasized excellent schools for the majority, and the equity movement are at odds is widely acknowledged (Boyd, 1989; Maeroff, 1988). In particular, the children of urban poverty have missed the benefits of the school reform movements of the 1980s. Maeroff observes: "Students in big cities suffer in ways that seem much more resistant to improvement than the educational woes of students in other settings" (p. 636). Thus, the reform movement of the 1980s may well have widened the gap between the haves and the have nots.

Levin (1988a) defines these have nots, or "at-risk" students as:

> Pupils who are defined as educationally disadvantaged or at risk lack the home and community resources to fully benefit from conventional school practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement

and experience high secondary school drop-out rates. (p. 1)

If at-risk students cannot benefit fully from conventional schooling, then it follows that they can hardly benefit from reforms designed to improve the conventional approach. Levin (1988a) also points out that at-risk students "...are especially concentrated among racial and ethnic minority groups, immigrants, language minorities, and economically disadvantaged populations" (p. 1), the very populations that are expected grow as a percentage of the total population in the foreseeable future. Thus, it also follows that if schools are to serve better the growing at-risk student population, a different approach to school reform is needed: One that does not merely strengthen the tenets of conventional education--by moving back to the basics and increasing requirements--but that fundamentally changes the assumptions upon which schools for at-risk populations are based.

The Accelerated Schools movement provides a framework for such fundamental change. Accelerated Schools concepts change the basic premises upon which education for the disadvantaged are based (Levin, 1988a & b; 1989) and emphasizes acceleration rather than remediation for at-risk students. The Accelerated Schools process also proposes a well-defined set of principles that, in combination, can fundamentally change the operation of the schools where they are implemented.

Recent research highlights the fact that teachers in many schools have been told to follow prescribed sequence of small-

step learning of factual material. Such prescriptions frequently have resulted in or reinforced emphasis on low-level learning and mindless ejection of facts (McNeil, 1986). Wise (1988) offers a classic description of this tendency when he portrayed this technique as lending to an educational world in which "passive learners [are] fed basic skills in bite-sized chunks to be regurgitated on command before the next scrap of spartan fare can be served" (p. 328-329).

The curriculum in an Accelerated School is heavily language-based, including mathematics. Emphasis is placed on analysis, concepts, problem-solving, and application in all subjects from the early primary grades. The curriculum design is focused on increasing student capacity through providing conceptual and analytical tools that will enhance the capacity to learn more advanced material.

The selection of instructional strategies depends on those "...that will reinforce the curriculum approach and build on techniques that have shown effectiveness with the disadvantaged" (Levin, 1988a, p. 29). Teaching and curriculum approaches are used to maximize the interest of students and to engage them in active learning.

THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROCESS

Philosophy

At-riskness is not part of the student. At-risk students are the same of others (Levin, 1988b). Comer (1988) considers that, "...the contrast between a child's experience at home and

those in school deeply affects the child's psychosocial development, and that this in turn shapes academic achievement" (p. 43). The overall goal of Accelerated Schools is to eliminate this at-risk situation and bring all students into the educational mainstream. Instead of viewing at-riskness as an internal trait, Accelerated Schools offer a different definition --that of a child being in an at-risk situation. Children are placed in an at-risk situation when there is a mismatch between the resources and experiences they get at home and expectations they find at school.

The Accelerated Schools philosophy is premised on the tenet that if a school is not good enough for the children of the school staff, it is not good enough for any child. This is the standard toward which all Accelerated Schools strive, to create their own dream school which they would want for their own children (Levin, 1988b).

Model

The transformation of a conventional school into an Accelerated School evolves its restructuring around three guiding principles: establishment of a unity of purpose; empowerment coupled with responsibility; and development of an instructional approach that builds on the strengths of the school community (Levin, 1988a & b; 1989). Through these principles, Accelerated School communities work together and create a pedagogy that considers the total learning environment.

Unity of purpose involves the development of a clear vision of the organizational and instructional framework required to bring students into the mainstream of education. The school's vision embodies the unified efforts of parents, teachers, administrators, school staff members, and students around the realization of their common goals and endeavors.

Empowerment coupled with responsibility refers to an acknowledgment of parents', teachers', and students' capacity and willingness to take responsibility for the educational process. This involves identifying needs, making decisions about how to address them, and accepting ownership of outcomes. One of the building blocks of the Accelerated Schools model is the expanded role of all groups to participate in and take responsibility for the educational process and educational results. In Accelerated Schools, administrative roles are redefined to include input from parents, teachers, and students.

Building on strengths is a continual process of identifying and utilizing all available human resources within the school and its community. In this process the opportunities for maximal parent, student, teacher, and administrator demonstration of individual talents is crucial.

The principles and practices of Accelerated Schools are supported by a set of values and beliefs that create a visible attitude that is necessary to develop the culture of achievement and human-resource building. Hopenberg, Levin, Miester, and Rogers (1990) describe these values as the following:

Equity. All students can learn and have a right to the best possible education.

Participation. Children participate in learning; teachers participate in decision-making; parents participate in school decisions.

Communication/Community. Students learn through active group activities. School and community work towards a shared purpose by meeting, talking, and learning from each other.

Reflection. Students engage in problem-solving and more interpretive approaches to curricula; teachers and parents constantly scrutinize the world of the school and address challenges to improve it.

Experimentation. Teachers implement experimental programs as a result of communicating about and reflecting upon the school's problems; students are involved in discovery exercises.

Trust. Teachers, parents, administrators, and students must believe in each other and focus on each other's strengths.

Risk-taking. All parties must be more entrepreneurial in their efforts. While some new programs may fail, the ones that succeed are the key to lasting school improvement. (p. 12)

To support these, Accelerated Schools are organized into a definite governance structure which ensures the optimal

achievement of the school's vision and goals through total access, open participation, and a continual flow of information. They must, however, retain sufficient flexibility to facilitate periodic self-assessment and modification (Levin, 1989). These schools employ a tri-level governance model consisting of cadres, a steering committee, and the school-as-a-whole.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Cadres are small working groups of teachers, support staff, and parents who meet weekly to address weaknesses and priority areas of the school's vision. Typical areas include school community relations, curriculum, school climate, discipline, and parental involvement.

The Steering Committee is the intermediate governing body of the school and consists of the principal and a representative from each cadre. Parents, students, and central office personnel may also be members of the Steering Committee. The purpose of this group is to coordinate the efforts of the various groups and to develop recommendations that will be presented to the school-as-a-whole. All decisions concerning the school go to the Steering Committee.

The school-as-a-whole is involved in the discussion and decision-making process. Consensus among members (teachers, parents, administrators) is essential, especially in decisions

regarding the arenas of curriculum, instruction, and allocation of resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

All four of the schools used in the study were into the restructuring process at the time of the site visits in the spring of 1991. Three of the schools visited were nearing completion of their first year of the process, and entering the Inquiry (or implementation) stage. The fourth school was ending its second year and had one year experience with the new environment.

The case study research method was used for this study. Case study research involves an assortment of research methodologies, including interviews, direct observations, document reviews, archival records, participant observation, and surveys. The specific approaches used to collect and analyze information on the four schools is discussed below.

Date Sources

Institutional documents were collected and analyzed. Documents such as test scores, attendance records, parental involvement and attendance at meetings, memoranda, administrative documents, grant applications, vision statements, surveys, and brainstorming papers were utilized in the change process. These documents were also examined in the case study.

Direct interviews were conducted at each school site, including teachers, administrators (principals and assistant principals), and others (e.g. social workers and parents). The

principal of each of the schools was consulted to identify the parents and teachers to be interviewed. An attempt was made to talk to people who both supported and resisted the change process. An interview guide used for the study asked questions about: a) The status of each school before the implementation of the Accelerated Schools concept or change process; b) the status of the school at the time of the interviews; and c) the factors that facilitated or inhibited change in the schools. A total of 35 people were interviewed for the study.

The questions solicited information about the status of the school before the restructuring process and at the time of the site visit, as well as about factors that influenced the change process. Questions about histories and current status of the school considered five dimensions: a) relations with the central office, b) the role of the principal, c) the role of teachers, d) the role of parents and the community, and 3) pedagogical processes in the school. This paper focuses on the area of curriculum and instruction and the school in the restructuring process. However, changes in all of the factors have been analyzed (Davidson, 1992) and will be discussed as they pertain to the topics of the paper.

Field notes were taken during the interviews and most of the interviews were taped. After each interview, a written record was made of each session, using a method recommended by Lofland and Lofland (1984). These records contained: a) Summaries and notes of what was said, b) recorded transcription of important

responses, c) notes on methodology, and d) personal emotional experiences. Each taped interview was typed verbatim and the transcript was sent to the interviewee for review and verification of facts.

Case studies were developed and analyzed for each of the schools (Davidson, 1992). The names of the schools and interviewees were changed in order to disguise the real identities. Names were disguised to assure openness. Disguising was also important because the analyses critically examined the extent of change in each school and the reasons why change occurred.

Analysis Method

Two analysis methods were used. First, a continuum was developed to assess the extent of change in the role of parents. One side of the continuum (the left) represented the characteristics of the traditional mode of school organization: emphasis on remediation. The other side of the continuum (the right) represented the extreme characteristics of the Accelerated Schools model: emphasis on acceleration. Each side of the continuum was further divided into "extreme" and "moderate," indicating degree of the characteristics of either end of the continuum. The middle quatrain of each continuum was considered neutral. For example, the extreme left quatrain would assume virtually all the characteristics of the top-down mode.

Judgments were made about quatrains on the continuum based on the following criteria:

1. Does the teacher use curriculum guides exclusively without making any discretionary choices?

2. Does the teacher supplement the curriculum guides with outside, readiness materials?

3. Do the questioning techniques of the teacher develop critical thinking skills or reinforce recitation?

4. Does the curriculum apply learning to everyday problems and events and focus on problem-solving and higher order analytic skills?

5. Do instructional practices foster active learning experiences including the strategies of peer tutoring and cooperative learning?

6. Was there strict adherence to the curriculum guides and state guidelines without regard to the appropriateness of the material as it relates to the culture and backgrounds of the students?

These questions were used to assess the place a school fell on each continuum. The status of the school was assessed at two points: 1) before the Accelerated Schools process, and 2) at the time of the site visits. Judgments were made based on the responses of teachers that had been members of the faculty prior to the adoption of the process. The continuum was used to assess the extent of change in the area of curriculum and instruction based on teachers recollections. Interview results are presented to illustrate the judgments used to place schools on the continuum.

Second, analyses of other factors included in the full study (Davidson, 1992) are reexamined here to determine which factors influenced change in the area of curriculum and instruction in these schools. The other four factors were analyzed using a similar methodology to the one developed for curriculum and instruction.

ANALYSIS

This analysis focuses on change in the area of curriculum and instruction in the four Accelerated Schools. The analysis is presented in four parts: 1) overview of the schools; 2) the initial curricular and instructional design; 3) the current curricular and instructional design, focusing on the extent of change; and 4) factors influencing change.

Each of the schools is located in an urban public school system in the South or Southwest sections of the United States. Two are located in the same large urban district (Griswald and McBride Schools); one in a medium-sized urban district in the same Southern state (Forest School); and one in a suburban district adjacent to another large urban center in a Southwestern state (Cedarcrest School).

The Schools

Three schools--Forest, Griswald, and McBride--were in the initial phase of implementing the Accelerated Schools concept. They were selected because the researcher had the opportunity to study them as part of the University of New Orleans Accelerated Schools Project. One of the schools (Cedarcrest) was selected

because it was considered an exemplary Accelerated School by national experts. It was completing the second year of the process.

Cedarcrest Elementary School is part of the Alamo Heights Independent School District in a large metropolitan city in the Southwest section of the United States. The majority of the district is made up of middle to upper class families. Alamo Heights has a reputation of being a private school district for upper class, anglo children. Cedarcrest School is separated from the other schools in this affluent district by a railroad track and a freeway, or in the words of the Principal, "...a double barrier." At the time Cedarcrest was constructed, the neighborhood consisted of middle class homes with an enrollment of 99% white and 01% Hispanic.

The demographics of Cedarcrest changed when the large, tree covered area in front of the school was converted into a vast apartment complex thus increasing the number of school age children living in the Cedarcrest district. Due to age and deterioration, the apartments have become government-subsidized, low income housing. More than 90% of the students in these complexes come from Hispanic immigrant families. More than 91% of the students are on the free or reduced lunch and breakfast program at school. Spanish is the first language for most of the families living in the complexes and many students enter school speaking no English. The students were performing in the bottom 25th percentile on district administered standardized tests.

Allison Agnew became Principal of Cedarcrest Elementary School in the Fall of 1988. She became interested in the Accelerated Schools model after reading an article by Henry M. Levin, Professor of Education and Economics at Stanford University. Ms. Agnew shared the information with the members of her teaching staff in the Spring of 1989. Prior to the opening of the 1989-1990 school year, the teachers voted to implement the project.

The student population of Cedarcrest for the 1990-1991 school year was 989. The faculty consisted of 70 teachers, two Assistant Principals, and a Principal. The ethnic breakdown of the student body was 78% Hispanic, 11% white, 5% black, 5% Asian, and 1% others.

Forest Elementary School was built in 1955 in the architectural style of the period. A member of the Tanglewood Independent School District, Forest is located in a large metropolitan city in the Southern region of the United States. The school community consists of single family residences, the majority with incomes below the poverty level. Ninety-eight percent of the student body participated in the free or reduced lunch program for the 1990-1991 school year. During the same school year, Forest had a population of 401 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with a faculty of 20 teachers, a principal, a secretary, 13 ancillary teachers, eight aides, five cafeteria employees, and three janitorial workers.

Racially, the school population consisted of all black students with the exception of 10 white children.

Marilyn Hasie became Principal of Forest Elementary School in 1983. Forest, like Cedarcrest, implemented the Accelerated Schools concept on its own initiative. A member of the Advisory Council of Forest School introduced the Council to the project through a brochure published by the Stanford University Accelerated Schools Project. At the directive of the District Office, an Advisory Council was created to offer recommendations to enhance and support the positive academic growth of the school. On May 23, 1990, the Council voted to implement the Accelerated Schools concept at Forest. Two of the Chapter 1 teachers assigned to Forest were instructed to write a grant to fund the project. The grant was funded and Forest began executing the project in the Fall of 1990. Thus, in the initial phase of implementing the Accelerated Schools process, Forest Elementary School was selected for the present study.

Griswald Elementary School and McBride Elementary School were selected by a Committee to participate in the Accelerated Schools project. The Committee consisted of three professors from the College of Education's Leadership and Foundations Department at the University of New Orleans and members of a large urban public school system. These two schools began the initial phase in the Fall of 1990 and were also selected for the present study.

Dedication ceremonies were held on February 15, 1939, for the building that currently houses Griswald Elementary School. The school is located in the inner or metro section of a large metropolitan city in the Southern part of the United States. The community consists of single family residences with incomes that fall in the low income bracket. The student population of Griswald, for the 1990-1991 school year, was 320 with a faculty of 24 teachers and a Principal. The ethnic background of the student population was 100% black. Grades pre-kindergarten through sixth are taught in the school. In the Fall of 1989, William Brewer became Principal of Griswald School.

John P. McBride Elementary School, a member of the Lake View Independent School District, is situated on a 7.15 acre site in a suburban area of a large metropolitan city in the Southern region of this country and opened its doors in 1959. The setting of the school provides for an unusual degree of quiet and privacy and is compatible with house designs in the area. Homes in the area are primarily privately-owned, single-family dwellings. For the 1990-1991 school year, the enrollment of McBride School was 406 in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth. Of these, 60% qualified for free lunch, 12% received reduced priced lunch, and 28% paid the full price for lunch. The ethnic composition of the student body was 99.09% black and .01% white. The faculty consisted of a Principal, a secretary, 15 regular classroom teachers, nine Special Education teachers, nine support personnel, six paraprofessionals, and nine custodial and

lunchroom personnel. Ruth Oliver became the Principal of McBride School in the Fall of 1980.

The Initial State of the Schools

There was not a great deal of variation in the area of curriculum and instruction at the time of the site visit. The teachers that were members of the faculties of Cedarcrest, Griswald, and Forest before the Accelerated Schools process was set in motion, agreed that they had very little input into the development of the curriculum for their school. The school districts of each of the three schools made the decisions on curriculum content and the curriculum guides provided the instructional implementation. This lack of contribution into the pedagogy on the part of the school community is representative of the features of the extreme quatrain on the left side of the continuum.

The six teachers at Cedarcrest recalled that the curriculum guides and the Essential Elements (EEs) required by the State left no room for creativity or contribution on the part of the individual teacher. The curriculum guide and the directions of the District Coordinator were so specific that one teacher remembered wondering, "...what did I go to school for? Anybody could come in here and do this." Another teacher stated that, "We [the teachers] didn't feel comfortable to take any chances and go beyond what the curriculum guide said."

A member of the Forest faculty expressed the views of the other interviewees when s/he described the curriculum as, "Very

traditional. Very authoritative. Very little beyond the basic, the textbooks. If you are on this page, go to this page next. Very rote."

A number of the teachers interviewed at Griswald had been members of the faculty for more than ten years. The environment at the school before the arrival of the Principal, William Brewer, was "...a good one" for these teachers. Adhering to the rules and regulations of the district policy and following the curriculum guides provided a comfortable and secure climate for the staff.

The teachers interviewed that were members of the McBride faculty prior to the implementation of the Accelerated Schools process explained that a few teachers were using "a little bit of flexibility" in the area of curriculum and instruction. Strict adherence to the curriculum guides and the time allotment for each subject were being questioned and a few changes were implemented. This movement toward decision making in the area of curriculum and instruction compares to the characteristics in the moderate quatrain on the left side of the continuum.

Status of Schools at the Time of the Site Visit

The implementation of the Accelerated Schools process produced a change in the area of curriculum and instruction in each of the four schools. Before the implementation of the Accelerated Schools process, the focus on curriculum and instruction at Cedarcrest coincided with the extreme quatrain on the "emphasis on remediation" side of the continuum. The change

that occurred in this area resulted in a match with the extreme quatrain on the "emphasis on acceleration" side of the continuum --an impressive shift from one end of the continuum to the other.

The teachers at Cedarcrest were able to overcome the gap that was created by having to meet the requirements of the EEs and the curriculum guides and yet meet the needs of the students. The Accelerated Schools model enabled the faculty to structure the pedagogy in such a way that, as one teacher articulated, "...we [the teachers] are giving them the things that they need to support their learning. The whole idea is to teach the essential elements, to get it in, but to give the kids what they need."

The results of the change in the area of curriculum and instruction at Cedarcrest were summed up by one teacher when s/he stated, "Our kids get a lot of breadth and depth. We really dig deep. And if we find something that they are really into, then we'll take the time to research it and get into it and have a good time with it."

The faculty members that were interviewed at McBride acknowledged that a change had occurred in the area of curriculum and instruction. This change was evidenced by the comments of the teachers such as "...more freedom," "...deviate a little bit," "...a lot of flexibility," and "...curriculum wise, it's working."

At McBride the area of curriculum and instruction was, as the Principal stated, "...beginning to change because we're

putting our emphasis on creative drama and creative arts. So we are trying to funnel as much of the basic skills and whatever skills through the area as possible."

A workshop on creative writing had been planned to provide special training for the teachers on how to teach writing to the children. The workshop, entitled, "The UNO [University of New Orleans] Writing Project," was scheduled to accommodate the needs and time restrictions of the faculty. The change that occurred after the implementation of the Accelerated Schools process produced qualities that match the features of the neutral quatrain on the continuum.

The change process at both Griswald and Forest resulted in characteristics that correspond with the traits of the moderate quatrain on the left side of the continuum. At Forest team teaching was being utilized by several of the first and second grade teachers. A number of the teachers interviewed mentioned, "...going beyond the textbooks" and "...looking for real motivational activities." Forest's Principal, Marilyn Hasie, explained that the change process had more effect on the area of instruction at Forest than on curriculum when she stated, "I don't know what great changes we have made because it [the curriculum] is handed down and you know of accept it."

Mrs. Hasie commented that instruction techniques had improved as a result of staff development. As she noted, "We're offering opportunities for teachers to go to workshops, inservice. And then the staff development that we do at the

building level has done a lot to improve all of us, I think, in what we're trying to do as far as working with children."

Each of the teachers interviewed at Griswald stated that some changes were taking place in the area of curriculum and instruction in their individual classrooms. The Principal, William Brewer, noted even though the process was "going slowly" most of the teachers were beginning to look at the curriculum and were beginning "...to make choices about what they feel a good learning environment is and to be able to achieve that."

ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGES

Table 1 depicts the focus of curriculum and instruction before the Accelerated Schools process (bracketed "1") and the focus at the time of the site visits (bracketed "2"). In the

Insert Table 1 About Here

area of curriculum and instruction, each of the schools made some progress toward the "emphasis on acceleration" end of the continuum due to the implementation of the Accelerated Schools process. The teachers interviewed at Forest, McBride, and Griswald were beginning to question some of their instructional techniques and were experimenting with some changes in the curriculum. At Forest some team teaching was taking place and grade level teachers were working together for the first time. The depth of the change that occurred at Cedarcrest is illustrated by the decision on the part of the faculty to change

from a structure of departmentalization to self-contained classrooms.

The change process gave the teachers the knowledge and confidence to begin: a) Questioning the methods currently being used in their classrooms, and b) implementing changes in their classrooms that would maximize the interest of students and to engage them in active learning. In the two schools where the principal did not become the facilitator, the teachers, on their own initiative, were initiating and implementing pedagogical changes in their individual classrooms.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED CHANGES

There was evidence from the case studies that three factors combined to influence--facilitate or inhibit--change in the area of curriculum and instruction in the schools. The summary analysis of these factors, presented below, is based on an in depth analysis of each of these factors (Davidson, 1992).

Factor # 1. The district offices had a minor influence on the restructuring. Two of the schools--McBride and Griswald--were in a large urban district that had not yet made a commitment to moving toward site-based management in 1990-1991. The Principal at McBride, who had been in her role for 11 years at the time of the site visit, used the Accelerated Schools process to distance her school from district policies. She used the process as an excuse for going her own way. In contrast, the Principal of Griswald had previously been curriculum specialist with the district office and was new to the school. He used the

Accelerated Schools process as an opportunity to push many of his curricular ideas, which were consistent with district policies.

The other two schools--Forest and Cedarcrest--were in districts that had moved toward site based management. Forest decided to initiate the Accelerated Schools model as part of its site based management process. At Cedarcrest, the school experienced little district resistance to the process, but received no district support.

Thus, district movement to site based management policies can help foster the Accelerated Schools process. In contrast, the absence of this site based management policy does not necessarily inhibit the process, if the district neglects the school and the principal ignores the district office.

Factor # 2. There was evidence of a relationship between the leadership style of the principal, teacher empowerment, and curricular and instructional changes, at least in the Accelerated Schools process. The role of the principal, the role of the teachers, and teacher empowerment appeared to be a crucial aspect of school restructuring. These findings support the arguments by Levin (1987) that schools that are successful in empowering teachers also appear to have great potential for making curricular improvements.

The principals and their capacity to change their leadership styles was an important factor in giving the teachers the initiative to begin making changes in the area of curriculum and instruction. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1987) argue that people

go through an unfreezing process before they begin to relate to others in a way that fosters free and informed choice, internal commitment, and taking of personal responsibility for their own actions. They further argue that a process of testing new behaviors--of trying out new ways of behaving in organizational settings--is indicative of the unfreezing process. From the interviews and observations, it appears that this individual transition process has two stages. The first stage involves testing to see: a) Whether administrators are really serious about the concept of empowerment, and b) what types of personal behaviors are effective in promoting a change in the culture of the school. The second stage, which only emerges for those who do the testing when they feel the environment is safe, involves making personal commitments to making the school work better.

Many school leaders espouse beliefs in empowerment, yet few actually behave in a way that promotes meaningful teacher empowerment. For an Accelerated School to work, it is necessary for principals and other school leaders to begin to narrow the gap between their espoused theories and their theories in use; and it is essential that both emphasize empowerment.

The three schools that had evidence of change in the role of the principal also exhibited significant changes in pedagogical area. Two of the schools--Griswald and Cedarcrest--had new principals who initiated the process. Griswald, which exhibited a little change in the area of curriculum and instruction, had a principal with an authoritarian approach, who seemed unable to

change his style, even with coaching from university faculty who provided technical assistance. This attitude resulted in teachers becoming malevolent because they were restrained in their attempts to implement a process that they believed would raise the academic performance levels of their students.

Cedarcrest, where the most change in the area of curriculum and instruction occurred, also had a new principal who initiated the process. However, Allison Agnew, seemed to have a deep personal commitment to pedagogy which was recognized by the entire school community. As a result, the released creativity and enthusiasm of the teachers, students, and parents allowed innovative and exciting changes to occur in the structure of the school.

The other two schools had long-term principals who had previously functioned in an autocratic leadership style. At Forest, Marilyn Hasie found this a difficult transition. A motivated and dedicated teacher assumed the role of facilitator and inspired the faculty to move toward acceleration. Several members of the faculty began questioning their instructional techniques. Some teachers initiated a team teaching approach. This movement motivated the Principal to make some changes in her leadership style resulting in a less rigid attitude toward the changes taking place in the school.

In contrast, at McBride, Ruth Oliver had been looking for an opportunity to charge the school and readily embraced the Accelerated Schools concepts. The enthusiasm she exhibited for

the process motivated the faculty to initiate several programs that renewed parental interest in the school. As one teacher noted, "And here lately, they found out that we do need them. You know, they're coming around a little more since we're in the Accelerated Schools program."

Thus, the style of the principal seems critical to encouraging and empowering teachers to make changes in the area of curriculum and instruction. But it is not necessary to assign a new principal to a school, if a principal is willing to make a change. However, it is difficult to judge whether a principal is really willing, or just says s/he is willing to make a change. Griswald School was selected for the Accelerated Schools project because the principal appeared to be very supportive of the principles. However, parents and teachers indicated he did not have an empowering approach to the project.

Factor # 3. Technical assistance from university faculty played a minor role in the change process in three of the schools. Cedarcrest initiated the Accelerated Schools process without assistance from university consultants. After its success with test score improvements, Accelerated Schools specialists at a local university learned about the school, visited the school, and thus, Cedarcrest illustrates that schools can restructure without outside help. Faculty at the other three schools were trained in a university based program and were given technical assistance with the implementation of the process. In interviews, teachers indicated this university support was

helpful. However, the success of the schools was variable. And the university consultants had little influence on the predispositions of the principals. Three principals espoused belief and were open to coaching. However, the one principal who had a less open attitude toward teachers and parents, was also reluctant to use coaching from the university. Therefore, technical assistance by university specialists can help with the transition to the accelerated model, but it does not guarantee success.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

This initial study of the implementation of the Accelerated Schools process in a select group of schools illustrates that: 1) The leadership style of the principal can foster teacher involvement; 2) curricular and instructional changes began to take place when teachers were willing to make a personal commitment, to begin to take risks, and to take personal responsibilities; and 3) creative communities of inquiry began to develop in three of the schools.

The results of the study illustrates the current focus of the literature today. Sergiovanni (1992) notes that, "The more professionalism is emphasized, the less leadership is needed. The more leadership is emphasized, the less likely it is that professionalism will develop" (p. 42). The principals, and their capacity to change their leadership styles, was probably the most important single factor in the success of the Accelerated Schools process in the four schools. Meaning changes took place in the

three schools where the principals supported empowerment and shared decision-making at more than an espoused level.

The experiences of teachers help them to judge whether principals really believe in empowerment. If they do not, teachers find out very quickly and do not take risks. However, if the principal's approach to empowerment is genuine, then teachers can begin to take the risks necessary to change their roles in schools. As David (1989) notes, "...without autonomy, shared decision making has little meaning" (p. 46).

Research on organizational effectiveness suggests that creating communities of inquiry may help to make long-term gains in organizational effectiveness and to transform dysfunctional patterns in organizations (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1987). The results of the study indicates evidence of an essential aspect of meaningful school-based inquiry. There was substantial evidence that a sense of community was developing among the teachers in three of the four schools used in the study. A few such examples have already been discussed.

Finally, universities can provide training and technical assistance which help facilitate the empowerment process. However, other forces in schools can inhibit change, even if university assistance is provided. And there is no guarantee that university facilitators have the person skills and knowledge that can actually help schools with this difficult change process. The craft of facilitating school restructuring needs to be refined, both by school leaders and outside facilitators,

including university faculty. Thus, there is a clear need for continued inquiry into how change in leadership can best be fostered.

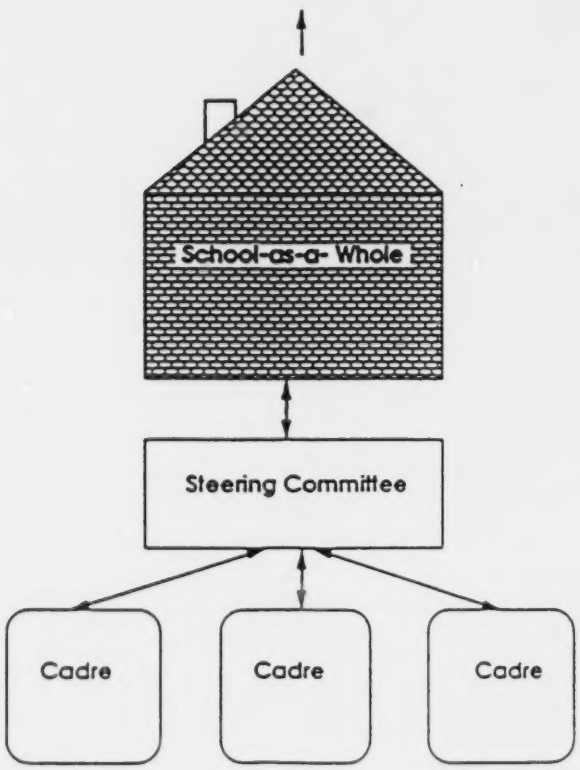
Table 1

Assessing the Extent of Change
with a Focus on
Curriculum and Instruction

Emphasis on remediation				Emphasis on Acceleration
Extreme	Moderate	Neutral	Moderate	Extreme
Cedarcrest (1)				→ Cedarcrest (2)
Forest (1) →	Forest (2)			
	McBride (1) →	McBride (2)		
Griswald (1) →	Griswald (2)			

Figure 1

Accelerated Governance Structures



Note. From Accelerated Schools Training Manual, 402 S CERAS, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3084.

REFERENCES

Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & Smith, D. A. (1987). Action Science. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Boyd, W. L. (1989, October). What makes ghetto schools work or not work? Paper presentation for Social Science Research Council conference on "The Truly Disadvantaged", sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, Committee for Research on the Urban Underclass and the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

Comer, J. P. (1988). Educating poor minority children. Scientific American, 259(5), 42-48.

David, J. L. (1989). Synthesis of research on school-based management. Educational Leadership, 46(8), 45-53.

Davidson, B. M. (1992). Building school capacity to accelerate learning: A study of school restructuring processes in four elementary schools. Doctoral Dissertation, University of New Orleans.

Hopfenberg, W. S., Levin, H. M., Miester, G., & Rogers, J. (1990). Towards accelerated middle schools for at-risk students. Center for Educational Research at Stanford, 402 S CERAS, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 84305-3084.

Keith, S., & Girling, R. H. (1991). Education, management, and participation new directions in educational administration. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Levin, H. M. (1987a). Accelerated schools for disadvantaged students. Educational Leadership, 44(6), 19-21.

Levin, H. M. (1987b, June). New schools for the disadvantaged. Paper prepared for the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory and the Conference of the California Council on Education of Teachers. Monterey, CA.

Levin, H. M. (1988a, September). Accelerated schools for at-risk students. CPRE Research Report Series RR-010. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), Rugters University.

Levin, H. M. (1988b, November). Don't remediate: Accelerate! Paper presented at the Accelerating the Education of At-Risk Students, an invitational conference sponsored by the Stanford University School of Education with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. Center for Educational Research at Stanford, 402 S CERAS, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3084.

Levin, H. M. (1989). Accelerated schools: A new strategy for at-risk students. Policy Bulletin, No. 6. Bloomington, IN: Consortium on Educational Policy Studies.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1984). Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

McNeil, L. M. (1986). Contradictions of control. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Maeroff, G. I. (1988). Withered hopes, stillborn dreams: The dismal panorama of urban schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 68(5), 633-638.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). Why we should seek substitutes for leadership. Educational Leadership, 49(5), 41-45.

Wise, A. E. (1988). Legislated learning revisted. Phi Delta Kappan, 69, 328-329.